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ABSTRACT

The aim of English teachers should be to refine and develop responses of children to literature. Development is defined as an increasing sense of form. In literature this relates to a sense of the patterns of events, a sense which increases as one's frame of reference of reality grows with experience. Children must be encouraged to trust their responses to literature and not rely solely on critics and teachers for their opinions. A means of improving response is to encourage individual reading in order to further literary experience. Included are study groups' discussions prompted by Britton's paper. The discussions deal with "Adolescence in Relation to Literature," "Modes of Approaching Literature in the Classroom," "Cultural Heritage," "The Emergence of Responses to Literature." "The Study of Literature," and "Response to Literature." "Literature and the Moral Imagination" argues that imaginative experience parallels the nature of real experience and in this way solicits moral imagination. Treatment of the moral imagination in the study of literature is discussed. (LL)

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STUDY GROUP PAPER NO. 5

Response to Literature

by

James Britton

Men make some things to serve a purpose, other things simply to please themselves. Literature is a construct of the latter kind, and the proper response to a work of literature is therefore (in D.W. Harding's words) to "share in the author's satisfaction that it was as it was and not otherwise." Literature is a construct in language, and language is, of all the symbolic systems or modes of representation, the most explicit, the best fitted, for example, to present a running commentary upon experience. It follows that much of the satisfaction in most literature comes from a contemplation of the form given to events, a characteristic that distinguishes a work of literature from a sculpture or a piece of music, where other forms are contemplated. A novel, in Susanne Langer's terms, is "a virtual experience." The satisfaction in which a reader shares, therefore, must have something in common with the satisfaction he feels, not so much in having an experience as in looking back at an experience he has had; it is as though he were to look back at an experience he has not had.

Clearly a naive writer and a naive reader may share a satisfaction in circumstances which would only infuriate or at least disappoint a more sophisticated reader. Is this response different in kind from that we desire for literature, or merely different in degree of intensity of feeling or complexity or comprehensiveness or verisimilitude? In other words, are such responses (and children must make many of them) the bad currency we seek to

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drive out, or are they the tender shoots that must be fostered if there is to be a flower at all? Kate Friedlander, a Freudian psychologist, noticed the tremendous satisfaction young children derived from reading stories related to an Oedipus situation--the fatherless boy proves his manhood in Treasure Island, the orphan girl has a series of substitute mothers in Heidi, and so on; but she sharply distinguishes this satisfaction from "a literary response," which she seems to feel must somehow have to do with art rather than life. I am sure she was wrong; these responses are unsophisticated in the sense that they are of the kind that might be equally appropriate to Treasure Island and a story of much less expressive form, but they are the stuff from which, with refinement and development, literary responses are made. Again, at quite a different level, teachers using the "practical criticism" method have sometimes introduced to pupils passages of literature paired with sentimental or otherwise second-rate writing, inviting comment leading to a verdict. Is not this an attempt to drive out bad currency? If, as I believe, satisfaction with the second-rate differs in degree but not in kind from the higher satisfaction, teachers should surely be concerned to open doors; as the pupils advance, other doors will close behind them without the agency of the teacher.

Our aim, then, should be to refine and develop responses the children are already making--to fairy-stories, their own game-rhymes and other lore, to folk-songs, pop songs, television serials and so on. Development can best be described as an increasing sense of form. In literature, I have suggested, this means principally a sense of the pattern of events, and this, however

rudimentarily, children certainly feel in the stories that satisfy them. (A three-year old referred to Cinderella as, "A bit sad book about two ugly sisters and a girl they were ugly to.") Progress lies in being able to perceive more and more complex patterns of events, in picking up clues more widely separated and more diverse in character, and in finding satisfaction in patterns of events less directly related to their expectations and, more particularly, their desires; at the same time, it lies in perceiving the form also of the varying relationships between elements in the story and reality, as increasingly they come to know that commodity.

But the forms of language itself--its words with their meanings and associations, its syntax, its sounds and rhythms, its images--these contribute to the total form, not of course as fringe benefits but as inseparable elements in a single effect. "An increasing sense of form" must be taken to mean an extension of responses to include these forms or perhaps the integration of earlier responses to some of them into a total and inclusive response.

Our sense of literary form increases as we find satisfaction in a greater range and diversity of works, and particularly as we find satisfaction in works which, by their complexity or the subtlety of their distinctions, their scope or their unexpectedness, make greater and greater demands upon us. Our sense of form increases as our frame of reference of reality grows with experience, primary and secondary, of the world we live in. A sense of literary form must grow thus, from within; it is the legacy of past satisfactions. It may also become articulate, find expression in comment and criticism, but equally it may not; and this, as pedants, we find

it very difficult to admit. There are certainly situations in the classroom where receptive listening and a following silence are more eloquent testimony of satisfaction than any comment could be.

It is probably true in the case of most adults that a reader's responses are sharpened (and perhaps more fully integrated with his previous experiences) if they are in some measure formulated, so that he becomes aware of the nature of the processes that have led to his satisfaction. But it is certainly not true for children under the age of eleven or so, children who have not yet passed through what Piaget has called the stage of "concrete operations." Here their responses to literature may indeed be lively, discriminating, and complex: but it will be no help to them to attempt to formulate those responses. There is ample scope for talk, of course, and value in it; but it will be talk about the people and events of literature and not about forms, conventions, devices, techniques. We should be more afraid of introducing such matters too early than too late.

It is equally clear that to be made aware of the processes that have led to the satisfaction of another reader--a teacher, say, or a critic--can have value only in so far as the knowledge helps us to formulate our own processes, helps us, that is, to become aware of the form of a response we have already made or are already capable of making. A critical statement is a discoursive form and quite different in organisation from the "presentational symbols" or "expressive forms" of literature, and an understanding of the one cannot substitute for a response to the other. (I take this to be the reader's counterpart of what Robert Frost said of the writer: "You

cannot worry a poem into existence, though you may work upon it once it is in being." The author's satisfaction in his work is something he feels and not something that can be proved right or wrong. The principle of organisation of a critical statement is cognitive; that of a work of literature is, in the final analysis, affective.

The point at which critical statements can be of help to a student is therefore a difficult one to determine. It is even more important, however, to consider the manner in which such help is offered. The voice of the critic must not be allowed to seem the voice of authority; more harm has probably been done to the cause of literature in our educational institutions by this means than by any other. It is all too easy for the immature student, feeling his own responses to be unacceptable, to disown them and profess instead the opinions of the respected critics. And to many teachers, with their eyes on what may rightly go on in other parts of the curriculum, this looks like good teaching. It may of course be the best kind of preparation for an ill-conceived examination, and this may be the real root of the trouble.

To have children, for whatever reason, take over from their teachers the analysis of a work of literature which their teachers in turn have taken over from the critics or from their English professors--this is not a short cut to literary sophistication; it is a short circuit that fuses the whole system. Children--and teachers--need to be encouraged to trust their own responses and not the reverse; it may be a slow business, but these are the inescapable limitations under which we work.

A response to a work of literature is, after all, an interaction between the work and the reader--not a free interaction, of course, but even the most sensitive and disciplined responses of two different persons must reflect something of their differences. Further, while Shakespeare may continue supreme and Samuel Rogers continues to be forgotten, some very general differences of opinion must be expected even among the initiated: there will probably always be respected critics who judge Silas Marner to be a bad novel and other critics equally respected who regard it highly.

Perhaps the meaning of a work of literature may be compared (as most other things have been) to the ripples that move out from a stone thrown into water; what happens to them depends to some extent upon the configuration of the pond. To me, Blake's poem "Never Seek to Tell Thy Love" has some relevance to the arguments I put forward earlier concerning the difference between a critical statement and a response; I do not expect the poem to suggest that to another reader, though it might if his interest in language resembles my own.

It is time something more practical was said. How do we encourage the improved response, the developed sense of form?

A girl of eight was asked what sort of things she liked reading. "Well," she said, "there's Treasure Island--that's a bloody one for when I'm feeling boyish. And there's Little Men--a sort of half-way one." "Don't you ever feel girlish?" she was asked. "Yes, when I'm tired. Then I read The Smallest Dormouse."

We must expect, and encourage, reading to go on for various purposes

at various levels and not concern ourselves solely with performance at maximum effort. "Reading for enjoyment" (to pick up on an ancient controversy) will certainly be an apt description of the lower levels but is probably misleading when applied to the most demanding kind of reading. Satisfaction, however, the appropriate satisfaction we have repeatedly referred to, must be there in the end, and no examination requirement or other external incentive can take its place; reading without satisfaction is like the desperate attempts we make to keep a car going when it has run out of petrol.

That a student should read more books with satisfaction may be set down as one objective; as a second, he should read books with more satisfaction. We need to foster, in other words, wide reading side by side with close reading. The importance of freedom of choice is obvious enough in the first situation, less recognised in the second, since close reading is usually taken to mean class teaching. It is no less desirable here, however, and students should wherever possible choose what is studied in class or, better still, by groups on their own with occasional help from the teacher.

The problems lie, then, not in knowing what to do but in getting enough suitable books sufficiently accessible. Paper-backs have made things much easier; local prescriptions and proscriptions that have militated against spending money in this way are on the decline in some areas, need vigorous attack in others. When other attempts have failed, the boys and girls themselves have sometimes provided a class library by pooling paper-backs, say for a term at a stretch. Such a collection may need supplementing to meet the needs of the best readers--who are likely to contribute the most rewarding

books and find little that is comparable in return.

The close reading and the wide reading should not be thought of as quite separate activities. If a good deal of talk arises from both kinds of reading, it is natural for something that one member of the class has found to read to be brought before the rest of them at his suggestion and become the object of a closer scrutiny. (It is always preferable of course that a passage studied should in some way be related to the whole book.) Active response to a work of literature invokes what might be called an unspoken monologue of responses--a fabric of comment, speculation, relevant autobiography; that lively expectations should accompany reading is an obvious necessity--they are as it were the carrier wave upon which the author delivers his message. Talk in class should arise from, and further stimulate, the individual monlogues of response.

It is in the context of this talk that judgements from elsewhere--the views of the critic or teacher--can best be handled if they are to be useful at all. Clearly, at Sixth Form level they can be valuable. As part of the to and fro of discussion they may be accepted for the help they offer; if the discussion is as open as it should be, they will frequently be disputed and individuals will be left free to reject them. The attitudes engendered by the mode and tone of discussion carry forward and influence the reading of both literature and criticism.

In all I have said so far I have accepted the terms of my commission as they would be generally understood. By "literature" therefore I have meant the body of works represented in literature syllabuses, studied in university

schools of English and the like. However, before finishing my task I should like very briefly to point to an unorthodox way of defining literature which has the advantage of placing it among linguistic activities generally.

I would go back to my opening paragraph and define literature as a particular kind of utterance--an utterance that a writer has "constructed" not for use but for his own satisfaction.

Sapir pointed out long ago that man, unlike the zoological animals, does not handle reality by direct and ad hoc means but via a symbolic representation of the world as he has experienced it. Given this, two courses are open to a man: he may operate in the real world by means of his representation, or he may operate directly upon the representation itself--improvising upon it in any way that pleases him (that allays his anxieties, for example, or sweetens his disappointments, or whets his appetite, or flatters his ego).

We all use language in both these ways, to get things done in the outer world and to manipulate the inner world. Action and decision belong to the former use freedom from action and decision in the latter use enable us to attend to other things--to the forms of the language, the patterns of events--free also to savour the feelings, to find in them another kind of organisation or form. We take up as it were the role of spectators: spectators of our own past lives, our imagined futures, other men's lives, impossible events. When we speak this language, the nearest name I can give it is "gossip"; when we write it, it is literature.

By this definition then, literature is not simply something that other people have done. What a child writes is of the same order as what the poet or novelist writes and valid for the same reasons. What reasons? Why do

men improvise upon their representations of the world? Basically because we never cease to long for other lives than the one we have; in the role of spectators we may have an infinite number.

In the literature we write and, with the author's help, in the literature we read, we give shape and unity to experience and vastly extend it in an ordered way. The writing and the reading are parts of one process. To be moved by a work of literature is in fact to be in the most favourable "posture" for starting to write.

Time does not allow me to bring talk into the picture, as it should be; call it the sea on which everything else floats.

Response to Literature

1) This report should be read in the light of James Britton's Study Group Paper 5, which created the framework for most of our discussions. We felt some uneasiness at the term "response" but accepted it on the understanding that

a) response is not passive but implies active involvement;

b) it includes not only immediate response but later effects;

c) overt response (verbal, etc.) may indicate very little of the inner response

2) Though our central attention was for literature in the ordinary sense we thought it impossible to separate this sharply from other stories, films, or TV plays, or from the children's own personal writing or spoken narrative. In all of these the student contemplates represented events in the role of a spectator, not for the sake of active intervention. But since his response includes in some degree accepting or rejecting the values and emotional attitudes which the narration implicitly offers as appropriate it will influence, perhaps greatly influence, his future appraisals of behavior and feeling.

> If we could obliterate the effects on a man of all the occasions on which he was "merely a spectator" it would be profoundly to alter his character and outlook.
>
> "The Role of the Onlooker" Scrutiny VI
> D. W. Harding (p. 3, 1937)

Most values are culturally derived; at their best they are the currency given to the adjustments to experience of the most sensitive members of

society. Thus, in entering into the "virtual experience" of influential works of literature a child is offered a "flow and recoil of sympathies" that accords with the culture pattern in which he is growing up.

If it is accepted, then, that a work of literature will embody values in the broadest sense of the term, what is the relationship between its appraisal as literature and appraisal of the moral values it embodies?

Clearly a reader cannot share in the writer's satisfaction in the organization of feelings when - all allowances having been made, for the mores of a former age, say - he cannot share those feelings. It is this which will prevent some readers from finding satisfaction in works which other readers approve, but it would be rash to say that the judgment in either case had been made on moral as distinct from literary grounds. That we could criticize a reader for having failed to make necessary allowances is obviously true - as might happen when a pacifist reads a war novel; but these are likely to be cases where a novel (or a play, etc.) is universally declared bad because the values it embodies are so out of key with those of the society in which it appears that no reader is able to enter into the feelings comprising its affective organization. This would accord with a generally accepted view that moral values exercise no restraint upon an author's choice of theme or topic, but are tantamount to a restraint upon what he makes of it.

3) Our discussion of ways to foster literary response at different stages of the student's education was qualified by the recognition that there are wide individual differences in rate of development and that in recent times the earlier onset of puberty, changed social expectations, and powerful

commercial influences have modified previously accepted ideas about the stages of childhood, adolescence, and early adult life (see Appendix I). Yet some broadly defined succession of educational stages has to be assumed.

We thought that up to the age of about 11 the problems are less formidable than they are in early adolescence. The younger child can respond directly and unashamedly to poems, for instance, and is less guarded in his personal responses than he becomes later. We noted the increasingly "extroverted" outlook of children around 9 and 10; this should be allowed for in the material they are offered. At the same age greatly extended private reading has to be catered for, many children exploring widely among books and devouring them at great speed.

After about 11, children are likely to put up defenses against emotional disturbances (especially those associated with heightened sexual responsiveness). Love poems become relatively unacceptable, although stock responses associated with friendship and generalized benevolence are common. Some of the changes occurring after 14 (especially for children whose schooling is soon to end) may be due less to adolescence than to anticipations of adult life and work, including anticipated disappointments.

We were agreed that problems arise from the uneasiness that young people of 15 or 16 commonly feel about expressing some range of their emotional experience, though they may have strongly sentimental responses beneath a veneer of roughness. This and related topics are discussed more fully in Appendix I. There are differences in these respects between boys and girls, and probably between single sex and coeducational schools.

Adolescents often see the relevance of works of literature to the emotional problems of their age group and sometimes welcome the opportunity of discussing it in class or with the teacher - though they may well resent any expectation that they should do so. The teacher needs great tact in providing an opportunity without seeming to press an invitation. Moreover works to be read should always be chosen primarily for their value as literature rather than for their possible bearing on psychological problems. Around the age of 16, students welcome literature centering in nature and friendship. From 16 to 18, teachers expect them to tackle poetry (e.g., Hopkins) that fully extends mature adult readers, though presumably not expecting a mature response. We accepted this as probably valuable and in any case inevitable because there seems to be little good poetry below the adult but above the childhood level. In fiction, however, a choice of material for students not yet adult is necessary and possible.

At this and other points we felt the lack of more exact knowledge (preferably based on longitudinal studies) about changes in the literary responses of boys and girls as they grow up.

4) It seemed to us that good teaching at different stages depends as much on the mode of presentation, and the mode of response consequently implied, as on the selection of materials (see Appendix II). The following were distinguished:

a) the individual child with the individual book;

b) literature as group experience, where the identity and response of the class as a group is emphasized (folk products, such as

ballads, and dramatic work by the children are likely to be central here);

c) presentation of literary material accompanied by discussion.

Any mode of presentation, to be educationally successful, must presuppose the teacher's genuine enthusiasm for the work of literature (allowing for the limited or different appeal that work suitable for young children may have for the adult). One consequence of this is that he cannot be content to leave students to their own unguided enthusiasms, although he may be well advised to start from those. He has the responsibility of leading students towards the full range of literary experience that he himself can compass. Certain works, because of the quality of their theme and treatment, have provided rich literary experiences to readers of varied backgrounds. Such writing, for instance, by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Twain, Lawrence, Melville, or Frost, though in some sense part of a cultural heritage, is not a packet to be transmitted inert. It is alive and changing; each generation takes from it what it needs and adds to it in its turn (c.f., Appendix III).

In guiding the reading of young people, the teacher has an obligation to move them towards maturer literary experience. They may be ready for particular works at different times and the experience may be presented in different ways, but an education that continues until 16 or 17 should provide some introduction to imaginative literature of the highest order.

Given more time we should have liked to consider what kind and range of contact with literature should be hoped for by the end of courses of different length and aim (e.g., for school leavers at 16, for science specialists, for

students going on to university English, for graduates in English); we noted the lead given in Appendix C of Denys Thompson's Working Party Paper 4.

5) We turned to the problem especially evident in the later years of secondary education and at the university, of the proper place of formulated critical comment and of teaching about literature. Appendix IV deals with these problems. In discussion we agreed that in the comprehension of a literary work affective involvement is essential but that it is no simple thing. In its ideal form it should be the response of a whole, organized person; and it should be consistent with a framework created, first, by an intellectual grasp of the work, its parts, and its principles of organization, and second, by knowledge of the world the work refers to, its connection with the student's own world and his social and moral experience, its relations to other works, and so forth. But no body of knowledge can properly take the place of personal, affective involvement with a work of literature. At the present time, in our opinion, there is too much learning about literature in place of discriminating enjoyment; and many students arrive at, and leave, universities with an unprofitable distrust of their personal responses to literature. We thought that at the university, as in the secondary school, the explicit analysis of literature (see Appendix IV) should be limited to the least required to get an understanding of the work, within the student's limits, and the aim should be to return as soon as possible to a direct response to the text. We realized that with the present forms of school and university examinations, this is impossible in the United Kingdom and often difficult in the United States.

We noted further that some forms of middle-class upbringing, or the development of over-rigid intellectual controls, may result in students being "emotionally disadvantaged." James Squire's study The Responses of Literature is dealt with in Appendix V.

The Appendices reflect the Study Group's discussions but are signed by the individual contributors because we have not had time to reconsider them in detail in their final form.

We should especially welcome discussion of:

1) response to literature, and learning about it, at the university (and the rudimentary forms of "criticism" examined in Appendix V);

2) the need for more knowledge about students' literary responses at various ages;

3) the usefulness of attempting to indicate a desirable range of contact with literature as a "cultural heritage."

Appendix I - Adolescence in Relation to Literature

Our discussion suggests that we agree that children (up to 12 or 13?) respond rather openly to literature, because they respond that way to living, too. Are we thereby meaning to say that children somehow can move freely between spectator and participant roles in their own experience, and so can be easily engaged by spectator uses of language in literature? And do we mean, further, that even in participant role, children at this age are largely concerned with inner directed structuring of experience, not with manipulating it for socially determined (secondary?) ends? Perhaps we should note Melanie Klein's suggestion that "the connections between conscious and unconscious are closer in young children than in adults, and that infantile repressions are less powerful." (Quoted in David Holbrook, The Exploring Word /Cambridge, 1967/ , p. 134).

Perhaps we want to say that in the early years of school, the teacher of English should organize his particular intervention in growth so as to protect and preserve the child's "creative subjectivity." By doing so, the teacher will not be delaying the transition to adolescence and maturity, or impeding it. In fact the transition may be eased, insofar as the teacher's moves may strengthen the child's "capacity to have genuine and strongly felt experience" and to be able to feel such experiences with understanding. (Cf. E. Z. Friedenberg, The Dignity of Youth and Other Atavisms /Boston, Beacon Press, 1965/, pp. 70, 113.)

The comment on children referred to above was said to have been based on experience with 11-year olds. We also have a comment on adolescents,

defined as children between ages 14 and 16. Is there a gap? Or is the comment on 11-year olds to be extended to the beginning of adolescence? Is it relevant that 15 or 16 seems to be the school-leaving age for most English children?

At any rate, the following points have been made about the possible effects of adolescence on children's response to literary works (and no doubt to compositions, too):

1) The stresses of the period may force children to erect barriers against the direct expression of emotion that may be found in literary works, most conspicuously in some kinds of poems. We have in mind not merely the emotional stresses that are conventionally associated with adolescence, but also the uncertainties and discords that come over children as they have the fact borne in upon them that they are about to enter a world of jobs and social responsibility.

2) Possible examples of such barriers:

   a) seeking the safety of conformity to mass attitudes, or participating in mass responses;

   b) refusal to express response (not a refusal to respond or a flight from response; rather a refusal to express one in so many words, because of peer group pressure or example)

   c) assorting of adult utilitarian calculus: what good is all this?

   d) (with "better" or older students) a recourse to literary criticism or explicit (i.e. permitted) responses, capable of more or less complete formulation, and representing, perhaps, an early capitulation to adult standards.

In part, of course, the behavior of adolescents is a result of developments in internal emotional economy. But we may also guess that the barriers mentioned above are as much responses to social conditioning as they are attempts to control inner turmoil. For one thing, they may reveal a badly directed early education, which has deprived the child of the opportunity to deal easily with symbolic expressions. It has been said that, in adolescence especially, education is designed "to starve out, through silence and misrepresentation, the capacity to have genuine and strongly felt experience, and to replace it by the conventional symbols that serve as the common currency of daily life. . . . It is still the spontaneous, vivid and immediate that is most feared, and feared the more because so much desired (by adults)." Thus, in early education we may do unconsciously (or at least without overt intention) what in later education we do quite consciously (at least in the United States). It seems likely that one result of adolescence is that the child learns to repress "meanings that are not subject to consensual validation. . . ." (See Friedenberg, Dignity of Youth, pp 5, 70; The Vanishing Adolescent (Boston, Beacon Press, 1960), p. 20.)

Appendix II
Modes of Approaching Literature in the Classroom

Three modes of approaching literature in the classroom have been identified by the study group:

I. The Individual Child and the Individual Look

From the teacher's view, this requires finding or assisting the child or adolescent to find "the right book at the right time." The approach requires availability of a wide variety of appropriate titles, teacher acquaintance with the books, and teacher understanding of the individual child. Any view of a program in literature as emphasizing the refinement of the individual's own response to literature necessarily sees guided individual reading as central to the literary education of the child, rather than as an appendage or adjunct to be relegated to book lists, "outside" reading, or out-of-school activity. In practice, this view leads to demands for classroom book collections, better school libraries (and accessibility of students to libraries), pupil-teacher conferences on books, class and group discussion of books which students read on their own, and similar activities.

2. Literature as Group Experience

Some literature and experiences in literature are corporate possessions and classroom approaches should recognize and respond to this fact. Such group experiences may include storytelling, folksongs and ballad, film viewing, listening to what others have written, creative dramatics, choral reading, oral interpretation, dramatic interpretation, role playing, listening to recorded literature - and related activities. In such group experiences,

the child (whether 5 or 15) relates his own response to the response of other children. What the teacher strives to achieve is far more than a cozy feeling of group "togetherness"; rather he attempts to promote a communal response which is at the same time affective and intellectual, personal and "other directed." Often a return to the oral reading and rereading of the same poetry selections can develop in the group a rich sensitivity to the pleasures of a shared aesthetic experience.

3. Presentation of Literary Material Accompanied by Discussion

A common approach in the classroom is the reading of a work of literature, with assistance from the teacher, followed by informal discussion (sometimes called "talk") or more structured discussion. Such an approach seems most appropriate when the teacher finds it necessary to assist the reader in creating a context for the work. One common form of teacher presentation is oral reading by the teacher as students follow in their books, with the teacher stopping from time to time to increase personal contact and enjoyment by shaping perceptions on the work.

Similarly, teachers may elect to read only the first passages of a work - sufficient to orient the reader and to rouse his interest - and then ask students to continue silently. Or with some selections and some students, teachers will ask for reading prior to discussion and then use the subsequent classroom exchange of ideas, perceptions, and articulated reactions as a way to encourage a fuller reaction.

Since the purpose of presentation by the teacher is to promote the student's understanding of and engagement with the literary work, such

direct presentation should normally be reserved for selections difficult for students. Works which are accessible to individual readers on their own should be read individually by students. Probably a distinction needs to be made between poetry and other literary genre. Because of its unique qualities, as well as its length, most poetry is perhaps best read aloud in the classroom at every level (often again and again), whereas literature of other kinds (fiction, drama, rhetorical literature, etc.) is often approached in other ways.

Stages of Development

It seems likely that these modes of approach will vary from level to level in emphasis, in the ways in which they find expression in the classroom, and in their appropriateness for different kinds of literary experience.

At the primary level, as children are learning to achieve independence in reading, a program of extensive individual reading may seem less central to the literary education of children, although even here individual selection of picture books can stimulate personal choice. Using the stories told or dictated by a child for his own reading seems related, though using such creative materials for an entire group seems more closely allied with presentation (Approach No. 3). At this stage many children will clearly need help in the processes of reading which lead to literary experience; more reliance on teacher presentation may be appropriate than later. Oral reading of poems and stories by the teacher may provide experience with literature which children cannot read silently; often a burst of response will follow. Sometimes a question or two concerning a selection may elicit a latent response.

During late childhood or early adolescence (ages 10-15), the emphasis in classroom approaches seems to shift, but all three approaches identified here tend to be used by some teachers. As the child gains independence in reading, the teacher encourages wider and wider personal reading. To guide such reading he finds it mandatory to schedule individual conferences with each child on his reading. Because research has demonstrated that most children during this late period will read more books than at any other time during their school careers, before or after, a carefully organized program of guided individual reading seems a necessity.

A continuing obligation remains to assist the young reader find satisfaction in selections he would not select or understand on his own. Most poetry will be introduced by the teacher (Approach No. 3), most often through oral reading, to be followed by discussion and frequently oral reading by the students. Short selections may be introduced to assist pupils with special reading problems.

At this level group experiences with literature take a form somewhat different than earlier. As children become more and more inhibited, dramatic play and story telling become less an experience than a social threat. Puppet plays, which enable a child to express a personal response as part of a common literary experience without revealing the humiliating constraints of his own body, are used effectively by some teachers. Interpretative readings and dramatic interpretations of scenes from plays written by others can also be important. Because oral interpretation assists teachers and pupils to identify problems and differences in individual responses, and can help even

inarticulate students in reacting to individual works, more stress on oral approaches seems desirable than is characteristic of teaching in many American schools today.

During the later school years (15-18), the approaches seem to continue, albeit in somewhat different relationship. As social and personal interests of students expand, wide reading tends to occupy less of the adolescents' personal time. The child's individual interests in literary experience may be increasingly satisfied by forms other than the book - by recorded literature, for example, by films, or theatrical experiences. The wise teacher will continue a strong program of individual reading but will expand this program to include discussion of other kinds of literary experience.

Group experience with the drama may tend to become more formalized, depending to a greater degree on interpretation of texts written by others, but continuing to use improvisation as a mode of approach to the text. Some teachers use drama to stimulate personal expression of emotion (as suggested in Study Paper 2 by Douglas Barnes). Others report adolescents as sharing a fear of revealing their own emotions in the group, as seeming to prefer interpretation of emotions expressed by others. Indeed the problems of overcoming the self-consciousness of adolescents seem to stimulate many teachers to overlook the continuing contributions of dramatic experiences in fostering an active response to literature.

As the young reader proceeds through school, teacher presentation of literature followed by discussion (in whatever form) can introduce young readers to new kinds of literature, can assist them in the problems of

perception and interpretation, and thus can free them to read increasingly mature books on their own. Close reading of individual literary texts pointing toward illumination of the particular literary experience and its relationship to all human experience, rather than analyzing purely external characteristics, seems to be the major method in guiding the refinement of student response. But unless the teacher stresses the processes of reading and responding to literature, rather than individual texts alone, he is not likely to help the student reader find satisfaction in more mature literature on his own. And unless the "presentation-discussion" approaches are carefully related to a program of individual reading, the student will have little opportunity to apply whatever competence in analysis and response he has acquired. The juxtaposition of "teacher presentation" and "student choice," long neglected in many secondary schools, seems fundamental in any sound literary education.

A word needs to be said about issues arising from the choice of selections for presentation in a class. Clearly the teacher will need to consider the characteristics of particular children and young people based on his past experience with students of this kind, as well as his own reading of literature, and should select those literary selections to which he feels a high percentage of students may respond. Because of concern lest "teacher presented" material dominate literary study in the secondary school, many urge that most such teaching concentrate on shorter selections - the poem, the short story or essay, even "extracts" from longer works (although others would challenge heavy reliance on extracts as violating the unity of a work and preventing student readers from experiencing a work of art as art, as

an organic whole). Still, most young people will not respond fully and maturely to longer works, to various kinds of drama and long fiction, without some help in learning the various dimensions of response. Although it seems likely that in some schools too great an emphasis is placed on repetitve teaching of certain kinds of novels, i.e., novels which tend to present similar problems in reading and response, sound planning will assure that these forms are not neglected.

In a very general way, then, this discussion of the modes of approach and the stages of growth suggests that the basic approaches to literary study are similar at all levels, even though the particular expression and emphasis on each mode may vary from one stage to another.

Appendix III - Cultural Heritage

Discussion thus far has centered on the responsibility of the teacher for deepening the engagement of the reader with literature. In concentrating on the processes of the reader, is there a danger that the teacher may neglect his responsibility to introduce students to the full range of literary experience?

Certain works, because of the universality or treatment of their theme, have provided rich literary experiences to readers of varied backgrounds. Such writing - by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Twain, Lawrence, Melville, or Frost - is sometimes called "the cultural heritage." This is not a packet to be transmitted inert. It is alive and changing; each generation takes from it what it needs, and in its turn adds to it. (We do not like the connotations of "acculturation.")

In guiding the reading of young people, the teacher has an obligation to move them towards maturer literary experience. They may be ready for such works at different times and the experience may be presented in different ways, but an education which continues at least until students are sixteen or seventeen must provide some introduction to imaginative literature of the highest order. ("All pupils, including those of very limited attainments, need the experience of contact with great literature, and can respond to its universality." (Half Our Future, p. 155) Whether by building on the points of contact between the book and reader, or by seizing on opportunities which emerge in the students' own responses to experience, the teacher must try to help young readers gain some insight into works which have conveyed

significant experience to discriminating adults. It may be that no single literary work is so important that it must be read by all students; there are bound to be gaps in individual experiences. But any literary education should include, say, some acquaintance with Chaucer, Shakespeare, some of the romantic poets, and the major fiction of the past two centuries. Without contact with his literary heritage, can an American really be an American, or an Englishman an Englishman?

Appendix IV - Response and Formulation

As objects of attention in school programs, literary works may be considered to be subjects of study. And to the extent that, because of such attention, the various works so treated may be viewed as forming a class (having at least the common property of being "studied"), it is possible to speak of the "study of literature" as a subject in the curriculum.

But "study of literature" is an ambiguous and even deceiving term, which often deflects the energies of teachers from what many of them now consider to be their primary concern. The term suggests, perhaps necessarily, that, in the classroom experience with literary works, students and teachers should be seeking regularities and similarities, treating works as data or the source of data for establishing or testing general statements about classes of literary works, their parts, their authors, or the circumstances of their composition; or should be composing rather closed formulations of the probable causes in works of assorted effects in readers. However useful, these are activities more appropriate to historians and critics, than to young people whose sensibilities or powers of imaginative sympathy are as yet unpracticed and untrained. And many teachers see that fact about their students as the one that should control and direct their actions in their classrooms. Without undervaluing or disregarding cognitive analyses of literary works or conceptual schemes for analyzing "literature," or the construction of complete systems of artistic or critical statements about works, those teachers would say that, in the classroom, the teachers' chief concern should be for extending

his student's disciplined acquaintance with and response to a certain number of literary works.

Achieving such an acquaintance is different from the study of a body of knowledge, because the student's affective response is an integral part of the experience with the work. That a student likes or dislikes items or exercises in chemistry or geology, that he admires or disapproves a character or event in history may affect the efficiency with which he manages the essential task of understanding and learning, but not the nature of what he is asked to take in or grasp.

In the transaction of comprehending a literary work, on the other hand, the facts are as they are in part because of the way in which they may be modified by the responses they cause in students. Affective involvement is essential to the realization of the work. Such involvement is no simple thing. In its ideal form it should represent the response of a whole, organized person; and it should be consistent with a framework created by, first, an intellectual grasp of the work, its parts, and its principle of organization and, second, knowledge of the world it refers to, its connection with the student's own world and his social and moral experience, its relations to other works, and so forth.

We emphasize the ideas of "response" and "involvement" in order to counter the consequences that seem to have followed too rigid application of some of the dogmas that cluster around the otherwise valuable notion of the work of art as a thing in itself. As often used "work of art," suggests the existence of something quite and wholly outside the perceiver, existing in

ineluctable perfection and subject to only the most partial and inadequate approach, rather like Henry James' mind, or anyway a gift. By our phraseology we want to suggest that works of art are by no means so separate from us human perceivers; rather they exist always as things that are becoming through their moment by moment experiencing by one or several perceivers. In a significant sense, works of art exist as perceived, or as a constantly growing and developing body of perceptions.

Of course there is something "out there" that is, or can be, an object of some kind of attention, and which provides a referent to test the fidelity of the perceiver's responses. Hence there ought to be no suggestion that "response" in our usage refers to anything free-gloating or merely emotional. And to clarify this point, it may be prudent to indicate the various activities that may be subsumed under the term "response." The primary center of the whole activity of reading is some sort of state in our feelings that we can call - no doubt for lack of a better word - enjoyment. How enjoyment comes about can probably not be very clear, but it seems likely to depend in some fashion on various kinds of activities that lead to understanding. It may also be supported by those typical (though may be not essential?) activities that form a kind of intelligent scanning and internationalized comment (maybe pre-verbal) on the work as it is being experienced.

Finally there is the activity that we are stimulated to or prepared for by all our other contacts with a book. When we have invested a good deal of value and energy in reading a book, there is, as it were, a reverberation of the work in our minds and affective systems, which leads us to return (sometimes

again and again) to the elements of the experience containing value. Perhaps the process is similar to that of a discussion where we sympathetically entertain the frame of reference of our fellow participant, following through its implications into realms of novelty hitherto unsuspected, and then recoil momentarily as we set this new frame and its implications against the context of our own beliefs and assumptions hitherto. A successive scanning and reorganization follows, as we move between the novelties we have entertained and our accepted tenets. Just so, perhaps, the partial world of any work of art questions and confirms elements of our existing representational world, making us look for a new order that assimilates both. This, too, is our "response."

In our model for teaching literary works, the teacher is seen as one who directs, or at least leads, a process by which students achieve, within the limits set by their different abilities and funded experience, feeling comprehensions of various works of literary art. We believe that this process should be seen as a continuing one, only part of which - no more than a beginning - can occur in the classroom, under the direction of the teacher. We tend to reject, therefore, what is often seen as the one valid form and test of classroom reading; that is, the formulation of descriptive statements about responses, interpretations, or structures.

We think it likely that a demand for more or less - especially more - analysis, judgment, interpretation, may inhibit proper affective response. This would certainly be true for younger readers and probably for undergraduates too. (results of premature formulation are horridly visible in

graduate students, but these are perhaps the most accessible group for the teacher trying to erode formulation and get back to response.) Jimmy Britton suggests on p. 4 of his paper that "in the case of most adults...a reader's responses are sharpened (and perhaps more fully integrated with his previous experiences) if they are in some measure formulated." "Some measure" needs a long hard look. We often suppose, encouraged by possessive intensities in our own response, by schematic literary criticism, enthusiasm, rage for order, and - of course the demands of examinations - that there should always be some measure of formulation, that there should if possible be a lot of it, and that the aim is total explication and explicit formulation. As teachers we should remember how long it takes even to respond to poems of our own choice, how often we are quite naturally numb to parts or wholes as we encounter literature, and not expect too much from the students. We should also keep an eye on the variety of literary experience and try not to use one poem in a way which creates a structure for an inappropriate reading of another. First encounters in the classroom should deliberately hold back formulation, should back away from everything that isn't tentative and partial. We should encourage, very warmly, verifications from personal experience, not frown on the "That's me" identification with a character, the superior "Are we still at that stage?" which Harold Rosen quoted.

People who need to use the concept of "discipline" in talking about response will be uneasy about the freedom of "That's me," but it can perhaps be accommodated even to a literary respect for the work of art. (Though the test of the good teacher of literature should be his willingness to sacrifice

the integrity of the poem in the concern for the student.) "That's me" has two components, and our aim is to move dynamically from the "me" of personal identification to the "That" of the poem or the object in the poem. The discipline lies in the attentiveness to the "that," and it should be made plain that there is no real dichotomy here, but a natural movement from subject to object and back again. The "That's me" may well reveal a very partial and too selective selection from the work, but the teacher will get nowhere in the attempt to make the work meaningful as experience if he does not begin with the "me." And this kind of identifying is often more interesting than it looks. A middle-aged schoolmaster (university student) who said "I am Bobadil" was not just being confessional, for he proceeded to look around and say that everyone else was too, and the discussion of the "That," was a discussion of the humanness of Jonson which moved miles away from autobiographical chat. But the particularized response should be primary. There will be movement round the many people in the class, and a restrained and thoughtful sharing of personal, incomplete, and implicit response which can lead back to the particular work, and to repeated sensitive readings. The reference to life is not purely illustrative but confirms the affective experience of literature, and is of course its foundation.

The teacher should aim at the teacher's, not the scholar's, best, dropping the possessiveness and awed respect we all seem to be able to feel so readily for works of literature. The teacher reporting the "low level" exclamatory response, or the autobiographical bit, or the extreme selection betrays an unholy preference for poems rather than persons. If the implicit

or partial or wrong response is stamped on by these literature lovers then there will be little chance that the student can be taken back from the "me" to the "that" in an extended exploration of the work's properties.

Some properties will be more easily explored than others. In some circumstances early or broad formulation is particularly inappropriate. When should the teacher try especially hard to sit back, relax, and shut up, to expose fragments, elicit fragments, pass on, be superficial? When the student is responding to something very distant in time and convention, say Spenser or eighteenth century verse or Scott, then formulation should wait - empathy is not going to come easily (if at all) and students should not be made to feel that they are aesthetic cripples if they simply do not respond. A toleration of the selective of superficial response may really be a way in. Recognizing the response implicit in an emphasis that looks odd, ... (?), or hostile, is an important action of the teacher's sensibility. It may be hard to move from the "That" to the "me" in reading Scott, but there are those other cases in which it is hard to separate the subject and object, as in an emotionally or sensationally confusing first encounter with something very raw or unaesthetic or powerful (or all three), say James Baldwin or Donne or Lawrence. Or there will be the difficulty of something very unlike earlier experiences, art which bursts expectations and makes the identification of the "That" very hard - Beckett would be the adult instance, any teacher will fill in the examples at school level. And there are those works to which we have an over-acculturated response which keeps the "me" miles away from the "that" - how hard it is to take in the fantasy in Jane Eyre, or Paul Dombey, or authorial address to

the reader, inhibited as we may be at various ages by current attitudes to "objectivity," "maturity," "sentimentality," and dramatic conventions of narrative. It may be useful to mix "examples of these types where formulation is best held off for sometime.

Affective responses come from people who are not necessarily organized and complete, and literary response, at school and college, is often crazily expected to come off in the same way in different people responding to literature from widely different periods and cultures. Response is a word that reminds the teacher that the experience of art is a thing of our making, an activity in which we are our own interpretative artist. The dryness of schematic analysis of imagery, symbols, myth, structural relations, et al. should be avoided passionately at school and often at college. It is literature, not literary criticism, which is the subject. It is vividly plain that it is much easier to teach children to write according to abstract models of correctness than to use their own voices. It is so easy to count and collect, to generalize, to reduce to thematic teaching where some investigation of the art of literature is allowable, but at an early stage, where it can only be swallowed whole, not broken into assimilable tiny pieces, it can only inhibit the feeling for surfaces, parts, and life-recognitions. Literary criticism is at the late stages too pretty useless unless it comes out of a personal engagement and insight, and if anyone doubts the inhibiting effect of literary criticism teaching or the inexperienced, there are plenty of examples of old inhibited critics making their structures and describing their myth-types in first-person-avoiding dryness, far far away from any affective response that

may have once existed. In university teaching in England there is not only great pressure from scholarly possessiveness, pursuit of excellence, and so on in which it is difficult for the teacher to shed, but also the lack of any encouragement of personal writing, discussion that exists in most schools and engages personality and feeling in its own creative literary activity.

Appendix V
The Emergence of Responses to Literature

Since young children learn literature by having it told them, or read to them, or recited, our discussion of their responses started from those activities that arise from listening. It seems to us possible, even probable, that the basic structure of these activities (i.e. of an adult response to literature) will develop by the age of 11 given reasonable circumstances.

We seem to observe four levels of response, emerging in sequence: briefly they are responses to the quality and pattern of (1) sounds (2) events (3) roles and (4) worlds. A few notes follow on each level.

SOUND: When children bounce on mother's knee to a song or a nursery rhyme, when they join in the chorus, when they chant "maximum capacity" round the room, and maybe when they chuckle at special words, names and puns (Fred Bare), they are responding to the texture and rhythm of sounds. Such overt actions seem to be both elements of their enjoyment and signs for it.

EVENT: Both rhythm and form involve a pattern of expectation (and of potential modification). Stories for very young children ("I'm on your one step"; "Seven foolish fishermen") embody a pattern of events within this rhythm or form. When a child corrects the storyteller and wants the story word perfect, he is asking for confirmation of the pattern (in one respect or the other). At a later stage he may make up topsy turvy stories with reversals of the pattern (on the Jumblias model), and finally may improvise on the pattern (playground rimes).

ROLE: In free play or classroom drama children will take up the roles of characters in their stories (or, if you like, continue some of the role playing that the story involved them in). "I'm Jack and this is the beanstalk and you be the Giant." Sometimes children will replay the story, sometimes reshape and improvise on it (perhaps relating the roles and events more nearly to their own wishes).

WORLD: While a story is being read aloud to a group a child may interpose: "He's a funny boy" (about Jan in "The Silver Sword" perhaps); and the group may begin to talk about his background, his relations with the other characters, etc. A new variety of talk develops. Its purpose is to relate and organize elements of the world of that story and/or to relate the world of that story to the child's own world. It will tie in all the four kinds of response, giving some a new articulation.

Talk of this kind is the main sort of "criticism" we foresee in the precollege years (and maybe at college too). For a further kind of talk that mixes with it we must turn from response to what is heard to the interpretative act of reading.

Interpretation in this sense has at least three levels. One begins when a child is conscious of choice: "Should I say it like this - or like that - ?" And the third often emerges directly after, when children in a group begin to disagree: "Saying it that way means so and so. But isn't he more like this, so we should say: -----."

Discussion of interpretation in this sense arises naturally in drama, choral readings, and preparation for recitals. (Maybe with school children

much of this work will stay at the second level?) But frequently the talk that explores the world of a book or poem leads to disagreements, and these may well arise from different "reading" of the text. So in classroom talk, interpretation of the third kind may interpenetrate responses of the four kinds we have listed. How this happens needs further thought.

Working Party 5

1. The Study of Literature

The "study" of literature is an ambiguous term; much of our concern is with the student's disciplined acquaintance with literature. Disciplined acquaintance with literature is different from the study of any body of knowledge because the child's affective response to what he reads or listens to is an integral part of his task. That he likes or dislikes parts of his geography may be a pedagogical help or hindrance but the essential task is done if he understands and learns the facts. In literature it is the knowledge of facts which may be a help or a hindrance; the essential task is not done without his affective involvement. This is not to say that mere liking or disliking of the work of literature is enough. The affective response should ideally come from a whole, organized person and be consistent with a framework created by intellectual grasp of the work and its interrelated parts, knowledge of the world to which it refers, social experience, empathic insight, and the child's awareness of himself - all of these things in a rudimentary or more developed form according to his age.

2. How can the term "values" be used in talking about literature?

Approval, and disapproval is felt, in varying degrees, as a concomitant of all human experience save the most trivial. It is the organization of the element in individual experience that results in attitudes or sentiments or behavior patterns which indicate the existence of standards or values in the individual. Crudely put, values are frames of reference for acts of approval and disapproval. Further analysis may classify them as political, ethical, moral, artistic, etc., perhaps necessarily insofar as value judgments are formulated, since approval or disapproval may be mistakenly attributed. However, we all make countless value judgments quite implicitly, and this may account for the fact that the boundaries between political, ethical, moral, etc., remain rather blurred for most of us.

In the process of developing values from acts of approval and disapproval we use the "virtual experience" of literature in much the same way as we use actual experience. In a work of literature, therefore, a writer transmits values (when he does so at all) not by precedent but by example. Insofar as he is didactic within the legitimate terms of his art, it is a case of "do as I do" and not "do as I say." (Decision and action are the outcome of language in the role of participant and not of literature, which is language in the role of spectator. While we admit there are difficulties in applying this, we generally feel that those areas in which difficulties arise are peripheral to literature rather than central.)

Since in actual life we tend to make value judgments in accordance with our findings more often than by reference to formulations (precepts, laws,

rules) the reading of a novel might be regarded as a rehearsal for real situations: approval and disapproval is common to both situations, but in reading they do not result directly in action. This very fact, as Denys Harding has pointed out, gives them a particular importance:

"Detached evaluative responses, though less intense, tend to be more widely comprehensive than the evaluation which precedes participation. One views the event in a more distant perspective and relates it to a more extensive system of information, beliefs, and values. And this detached evaluative response undoubtedly possesses the utmost importance in building up, confirming, and modifying all but the very simplest of our values.... If we could obliterate the effects on a man of all the occasions when he was "merely a spectator" it would be profoundly to alter his character and outlook." (D. W. Harding "The Role of the Onlooker," Scrutiny VI (3) 1937.

Most values are culturally derived which means to say that at their best they are the currency given to the adjustments to experience of the most sensitive members of society. Thus, in entering into the "virtual experience" of influential works of literature a child is offered a "flow and recoil of sympathies" that accords with the culture pattern in which he is growing up.

While it is accepted, then, that a work of literature will embody values in the broadest sense of the term, we must recall the group's previous statement that a work of literature is good insofar as it gives satisfactory form to the events represented, the language that represents them, and the feelings embodied. Is a work of literature to be judged twice then? What is the

relationship between its appraisal as literature and appraisal of the moral values it embodies?

Clearly a reader cannot share in the writer's satisfaction in the organization of feelings when - all allowances having been made, for the mores of a former age, say - he cannot share those feelings. It is this which will prevent some readers from finding satisfaction in works which other readers approve, but it would be rash to say that the judgment in either case had been made on moral as distinct from literary grounds. That we could criticize a reader for having failed to make necessary allowances is obviously true - as might happen when a pacifist read a war novel; but these are likely to be cases where a novel (or a play, etc.) is universally declared bad because the values it embodies are so out of key with those of the society in which it appears that no reader is able to enter into the feelings comprising its affective organization. This would accord with a generally accepted view that moral values exercise no restraint upon an author's choice of theme or topic, but are tantamount to a restraint upon what he makes of it.

3. Response to Literature

James Britton suggests on p. 4 that "It is probably true in the case of most adults that a reader's responses are sharpened (and perhaps more fully integrated with his previous experiences) if they are in some measure formulated." "In some measure" is the tricky area. We often suppose, and examinations beckon us on, that formulation should be explicit, broad, and objectified. In the teaching of practical criticism, where examination pressures can be dodged, at least in universities, we still find the teacher's over-intensity and self-regard pushing towards formulation. We might reverse Mr. Britton's suggestion and say that "It is probably true in the case of most adults that a reader's responses are deadened* (and left detached from his previous and subsequent experiences) if they are inappropriately formulated." When might a formulation be inappropriate? When the response is to something very new, or very highly conventionalized and distant in time, or very large (to Beckett, to Spenser, to a Victorian novel). Or when the response is to something intimately and rawly moving, either appealing or repelling: to James Baldwin, Donne (either might be either). Or when the response is to a very uneven artist, and the problem becomes one of discrimination between good and bad: Tennyson, say. In all these circumstances the teacher has to sit back, expose fragments, elicit only fragments, be superficial, chuck out, pass on, tolerate. Affective responses will be coming from disorganized and incomplete people and experiences, mere textbook

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*Deadened: depersonalized, desensationalized, departicularized.

knowledge of the world from which the book comes. The teacher is moreover teaching ("doing"?) literature in a context where there are other influences at work: critical books (often resorted to if the teacher refrains from being too analytical) and other students' judgments (sooner or later present even if the teacher refrains from evaluation).

4. Meanings of "Response"

Presumably "response" was first used in an attempt to counter the implications of "work of art" and so on. One suggests the existence of something outside ourselves, not a toy for our subjective fancies, a given- a gift, if you like. The other reminds us that the moment by moment experience of art is always a thing of our making, and in the case of silent reading, an activity in which we are our own interpretative artist. Of course, the activity is not in a simple sense original, and it requires a sympathetic discipline of imagination referred to in "fidelity of response."

A useful framework. But if we move closer to what is going on during our reading of a novel or poem, and as a consequence of that reading, "response" raises a number of difficulties. Among the activities involved in reading we might want to distinguish those concerned with interpretation, as distinct from the primary center of enjoyment, and those typical (though maybe not essential activities) that form a kind of intelligent scanning and internalized comment (maybe pre-verbal) on the "work" thus achieved. Perhaps watching a play offers simpler examples, and anyone who goes to the children's matinee at the cinema can learn a good deal about this second by second scanning at a simpler level. "Response" unfortunately amalgamates this activity with the more primary activities of interpretation and enjoyment.

Not only this: a further ambiguity is possible. When we have invested a good deal into the reading of a book, there is as it were a reverberation of such work in our minds, which leads us to return (sometimes again and again) to elements of that experience. Perhaps the process is similar to that of a

discussion where we sympathetically entertain the frame of reference of our fellow participant, following through its implications into realms of novelty hitherto unsuspected, and then recoil momentarily as we set this new frame and its implications against the context of our own beliefs and assumptions hitherto. A successive scanning and reorganization follows, as we move between the novelties we have entertained and our accepted tenets. Just so, perhaps, the partial world of any work of art questions and confirms elements of our existing representational world, making us look for a new order that assimilates both. This, too, is our "response."

Literature and the Moral Imagination

In every work of literature there is a perspective on the world and on life. In this perspective there is implicit or explicit what is called variously a moral dimension, a system of values, a vision of the nature of things, a truth.

Although this element appears frequently to be the most exciting aspect of a work of literature, it is never sufficient in itself to constitute the success of a work: there must also be (among much else) artistry, craftsmanship, the structural or shaping imgination, a sense of things, of people, of life.

The experiencing of a work of literature means in some sense an absorption into the drama of the work--this imaginative experience parallels in its elements the nature of a real experience. Thus, as real experience frequently calls into play moral judgment, so the imaginative experiencing of a work of literature frequently calls into being the moral imagination.

In the teaching of literature, as it involves the moral imagination, there are two ways to achieve a major failure: first, to treat the moral dimension as though it were the sole end of literature, to extract it, to encapsulate it, to divorce it from its material or dramatic embodiment and offer it to students as abstract truth; or, second, to avoid the difficulties and dangers of discussing the moral dimension by ignoring and concentrating on formal, aesthetic, structural or other elements. Both of these methods are reductive and lead to apathy and imaginative sterility in the English classroom.

Nor can the teacher avoid these failures by selecting works of literature to teach that do not disturb, that are not "subversive" or upsetting--works that are, in short, ethically antiseptic or morally castrated. The curriculum should be open to books of a great variety of values and visions, including those that rub against the grain of society, that counter prevailing values whether preached or practiced.

As the teacher of literature is concerned with developing and expanding the student's total imaginative capacity, so he must be concerned with all aspects of the imagination, including the moral imagination. He should not become didactic and attempt to inculcate beliefs; rather he should question, discuss, and explore with his students. Such exploration will lead more frequently to complexity than to simplicity, to ambiguity than to precision, to paradox than to resolution.

And some powerful, classic literary works will embody sets of beliefs so remote in culture or age that neither the teacher nor the students are likely to find them congenial. It remains the responsibility of the teacher, however, to render such works accessible to the students, perhaps by drawing such distinctions for the students as I.A. Richards suggests in his opposed teams, verifiable belief and imaginative assent.

One of the major purposes for offering a wide variety of authors and works in the literary curriculum is to liberate the student from his ethical parochialism and rigidity, to free him from a moral position often platitudinous and frequently unexamined. Literature properly presented should open to the student a variety of possibilities of values and visions, confront him (like life itself) with a multiplicity of ethical systems or moral perspectives.

This expansion and deepening of the student's moral awareness constitutes the education of his moral imagination. It is one important (but not the sole) aim of literary study.